

LPA DISTRICT 12 — NEWSCLIPS 1979 - 1989

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Creator — ERICKA PEASLEY VOL. 1 S121210







San Jose Mercury News, Saturday, September 22, 1979



# Little guy walks tall

It's a big world and since Wayne Olds can't cut it down to his size, he is measuring up to take it in stride.

Olds, 19, who stands less than 40 inches tall, is an electronics computer student at San Jose City College. And despite the fact that almost everything designed for the average person presents a major obstacle for him, he is too busy to worry about it.

When he was 9, his mother, Mrs. Frank Olds, recalls he played Little League baseball. When he got to high school the other kids had grown but Wayne hadn't.

And since he couldn't take part in athletic events, he became manager of the baseball and soccer teams.

"If he can't participate one way, he'll find another way to do it," she says.

While such things as getting a drink of water or turning on a light switch make it necessary

for him to climb upon a chair or a stool, it doesn't discourage him from trying his hand at cooking.

Nor, does his deafness (he wears a hearing aid) discourage him from playing the organ and the trumpet.

Wayne is master counselor of the Campbell Chapter of the Order of DeMolay and, according to fellow members, has more energy and enthusiasm for their activities than a dozen guys twice his size.

Recently, he and some friends decided that they ought to do something to help the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign and Wayne got the idea for a "straw-a-thon," in which in exchange for pledges, he and his friends managed to string 4,450 straws together and raise \$167.

He is, by the tape measure, a small man.

But, says one of his friends, by any other measure they "don't come any bigger."



Instructional  
Computer Center  
207c

No Food  
or Drink  
In Lab







*Clockwise from top, Wayne Olds plays football in his front yard with Vito Serpa, prepares to enter computer lab, gets playful shove from neighbor Tono Serpa and heads for a stool in class at San Jose City College.*







# ***13 Years Old, 18 Inches Tall***

He weighs only 13¼ pounds and stands just 18 inches tall. He dresses in baby clothes. His hands are no bigger than half-dollars. His voice is squeaky and high-pitched, like the recorded voice you hear when you pull the string on





But Nelson de la Rosa is no baby, no doll. Incredibly, he's 13 years old . . . a soon-to-be-man trapped in an infant's body.

Nelson survives by dancing all night in the cruel streets of Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic — whirling to the hot Caribbean music throbbing out of bars. People toss coins and call him a real-life Pinocchio . . . because the tiny dancer is like a puppet that has magically come to life.

"Dance, Pinocchio, dance!" they shout. Frantically he shakes his baby-size body.

He's the center of attention. But he wants to be more. Nelson de la Rosa wants to grow up like everyone else.

"Every night I kneel by my bed and pray the doctors will find a way to make me grow," the pathetic teenager confessed, his large brown eyes sad and pleading.

"All I want in the world," he said, tears welling in his eyes, "is to be like everyone else. Then I'll be able to work like a man."

Nelson's stunted growth is due to a pituitary gland that's wasted away, says Dr. Alcibiades Gonzales, who treats the boy at a free clinic in Santo Domingo's slums. Nelson won't get any bigger, adds the physician.

"But even though he's so tiny, he's got a heart of gold," declared Dr. Gonzales.

Nelson's life as a street dancer is harsh, exhausting. But he sticks with it because he's



**CRADLED** in her arm like an infant, Nelson kisses his mother.

the sole support of his entire impoverished family — his mother, his four brothers and sisters, and an uncle.

Said Nelson's mother, Pura Concepcion: "Five years ago my husband ran off with another woman. Then I lost my job at a factory. I gathered my five children around me and told them we had no money for food that week.

"Nelson put his tiny arms around my neck and told me, 'Don't worry, I'll make sure we get food.' He kissed me on the cheek, jumped off my knee and ran out the door.

"Two hours later he came running home. He had three pesos (\$3). 'Mama, Mama!' he shouted, 'I danced in the streets. People cheered and gave me money! Mama, we won't starve!'"

Since that day, Nelson has become a popular attraction in Santo Domingo — dancing and singing in his squeaky voice along the streets as followers toss money, stare and shout encouragement.

Nelson's shoulders, hands, wrists and feet are deformed. His back is twisted. But he dances his little heart out.

The coins thrown at his feet total \$5 to \$15 a night, a lot of money in Santo Domingo. But it's hard-earned cash. He performs seven nights a week, dragging home in the mornings totally exhausted.

"He insists on doing it,"



**18-MONTH-OLD BABY** towers over tiny Nelson.



## He Dances in The Streets to Save His Family From Starvation

said his Uncle Victor, 28. "He's the only one who can keep our family from starving. None of us can find work.

"I always go everywhere he goes. He was kidnapped once — that's not going to happen again."

Explained Nelson's mother: "Four years ago, one of our neighbors stole him and took him to another town. He was exhibited like a monkey and forced to do tricks for money. It was sickening.

"The police finally returned Nelson home."

She said Nelson weighed less than one pound when he was born at home. He grew normally, however, until he was age 2½ . . . but sudden-

ly the boy stopped growing.

"Children tease him because he's so small," she said. "It's so sad. He would love to play with them, but they pull his hair and call him 'Dwarf! Dwarf! Dwarf!'"

"Many times he comes running to me crying his heart out.

As his mom talked, Nelson climbed on an ENQUIRER reporter's lap. "Do you want me to dance for you?" he squeaked.

Gently the reporter took his tiny hands and eased him to the floor. Without hesitation he began gyrating crazily in time to the clapping of the reporter's hands.

A minute later he stopped and bowed formally.

Then Nelson threw his thin arms around the reporter's neck and whispered: "I love you, Americano. I want to be a man — just like you.

"Please, pray for me . . ."

— LEE HARRISON

NATIONAL  
ENQUIRER

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# Return Of the Munchkins

By Janet Maslin  
New York Times

**T**HE MAKERS OF "Under the Rainbow" have taken a strange idea and run with it, making it a good deal stranger. The year is 1938, "The Wizard of Oz" is about to be made, and a movie studio is auditioning Munchkins. So 150 midgets are holed up at the Culver City Hotel, preparing to don winged-monkey outfits and start swinging from the chandeliers. This would be plot enough for any movie, but it's about one-tenth of what goes on in "Under the Rainbow," which has enough story angles to make your head spin.

The film aspires to a breathless, madcap brand of comedy that would have required enormous energy and resourcefulness to be sustained. So the fact that the movie spins along at all is, in its way, impressive. For a while, as characters knock into one another in coincidence after crazy coincidence, the film seems to have ingenuity and momentum, or at least enough of the bizarre to hold an audience's attention. Later on, the energy runs out, but the gags keep cranking along anyhow.

The bizarre aspect of the movie is hardly the presence of the would-be Munchkins; if anything, they seem the sanest people around. Also on hand are a perky talent scout in charge of auditioning them (Carrie Fisher), a Secret Service agent with an eye for the talent scout (Chevy Chase), the elderly European aristocrats the agent is guarding (Eve

Arden and Joseph Maher), 25 Japanese photographers in white suits, one Japanese spy in a white suit and a tiny German agent in charge of locating the right Japanese. There's plenty more going on, too, all in this same wildly fanciful vein.

**T**HERE IS ALSO an element of black humor, as in a subplot about the European aristocrats' dog,

## Movie Review

named Streudel. The dog keeps getting into fatal accidents, and the Duke keeps substituting new hounds, none of which resemble one another very closely. No matter. The Duchess, as played very amusingly by Arden, hasn't got a very keen eye for detail. On first encountering dozens of midgets in the hotel lobby, she exclaims: "Oh, look at all zee cheeldren! Eet must be recess!"

"Under the Rainbow" was directed by Steve Rash, who brings to this film the same attention to detail that distinguished his other feature, "The Buddy Holly Story." The earlier material suited him better. Rash has earnestness and a touch of eccentricity, but he doesn't have the light-hearted wit to keep this kind of comedy working. Perhaps there's nothing wrong with "Under the Rainbow" that more laughs couldn't have cured. But it also seems that Rash takes his material too serious-

ly, so that he winds up pursuing all the plot's loose ends, instead of succumbing happily to their patent silliness.

The cast includes Pat McCormick, "The Tonight Show" writer who played Carol Burnett's hilariously ardent suitor in "A Wedding" and who is one of five persons credited with the understandably uneven screenplay here. Mr. McCormick has the joke that is both the movie's funniest and its most macabre. His performance, like Arden's and Adam Arkin's, is at the mercy of the material. All of them are funny on the occasions when they've been given something funny to do, but there are frequent flat interludes.

According to the production notes, the film makers paid careful attention to their Munchkins — it was difficult to lure so many non-actor midget extras away from their regular jobs, and the costumes had to be handmade. It's surprising, then, that the movie has gathered so many of them together and yet conveys so little feeling for them. Some of them have well-developed individual characters to play, but as a group their role is uncertain. The movie isn't out to exploit midgets, but it isn't out to understand them, either. It just lets them mill around en masse until, by the end of the story, it's hard to remember why they've been gathered together in the first place.

"Under The Rainbow," at the Century is rated PG for its strain of bawdy humor.



# 'You Can't Be Chicken You Gotta Be Brave'

By Robert J. Gore  
Los Angeles Times

WEST COVINA — Alex Luna vividly recalls how he found out that his 4-month-old son, Brian, would always remain a little person. Barbara, his wife, sobbing so hard she could not speak, handed him a card with the pediatrician's two-word diagnosis: "Achondroplastic dwarf."

Brian Luna is one of America's estimated 100,000 "little people," so nicknamed for their stature.

In a series of aftershocks to the disturbing diagnosis seven years ago, Alex and Barbara learned that there was little information available on dwarfism and much trouble ahead for their son: physical abuse, merciless teasing, staring and the persistent belief that people who share his disability are retarded. They turned for help to Little People of America, the organization founded in 1957 by actor Billy Barty, which in turn referred the Lunas to the University of California, Los Angeles General Hospital and Dr. David Rimoin. Rimoin said Brian suffers from a congenital bone disease. "There are hundreds of causes of dwarfism — some are genetic and others are glandular."

Rimoin also explained that there are two types of dwarfs: proportionate and disproportionate. Physicians do not recognize the word "midget," he said. Repaying their debt to the association, Alex and Brian have visited little people and their parents "just to talk and make them aware," Alex said. They have appeared on television interview shows as well. "I want to make sure other parents in our position do not have to go through what we did," he said.

Although Alex, a Southern California Gas Co. supervisor who lives here in West Covina, and Barbara, a secretary in nearby Covina, were divorced when Brian was 5 years old, they continue to share the desire that "Brian have outgoing, positive role models," Alex said.

Brian's friends at the association helped the Lunas when their son ran into his first real problem at school last year. "I wanted Brian to go to public schools to learn the system and to have friends. Some teachers suggested special schools. That's a lot of baloney. I'm not going to hide him away," Alex said.

But school involved difficulties. Barbara said Brian would come home distraught. "The first two weeks of school were abso-

lute hell," she said. Some of the other children were constantly hitting and teasing Brian.

Alex asked Barty to speak to the children at the school. Barty agreed and brought Tommy Madden and Tony Cox, two other actors who are also little people. The three spoke at an assembly. Barbara said the results were "absolutely wonderful. The children treat Brian like anyone else now and the teachers understand more about him."

Madden and Brian became fast friends as a result of the assembly. The 35-year-old actor visits Brian regularly.

"So many average-sized parents shun their children when they discover they have a little person. They put them in closets and totally disown them," Madden said as he watched Brian play cards on the living room floor of Alex's apartment.

"Parents must understand and help their children to understand that they are not dwarfs or midgets or freaks. They're little people," Madden said.

At the same time, Madden said, little people must learn they will be patted on the head ("That's one thing I hate") and must prepare for a lifetime of weight-watching and chronic back and leg problems.

"It's important for children like Brian to learn very young what to expect from the rest of the world," Madden said, "and you can't fight it. You have to learn to accept it or you'll wind up with a tremendous chip on your shoulder. Unfortunately, that's not uncommon among little people."

His son has learned from Madden, Alex said. "Brian can deal with quite a bit now. He's full of questions about his body, his clothes, his future ... everything." Alex said his daughter, Laurie, 15, and Robert Sylvester, a young friend, have been a great help with Brian.

With a low front doorknob, strategically placed stepping stools and an extended light switch in the bathroom, Brian is on his own at home. "He does everything any other 7-year-old would do — he just moves chairs around to get into things," Barbara said, "but he is very sensitive about hurting another's feelings."

Brian has his own, 7-year-old philosophy. "You can't be chicken, you gotta be brave, but sometimes you gotta ignore 'em, too," he said while trying to peek at his friend's cards. Then Brian looked up, pondering a sober thought.

"I just like everyone else," he said, "I'm just littler."



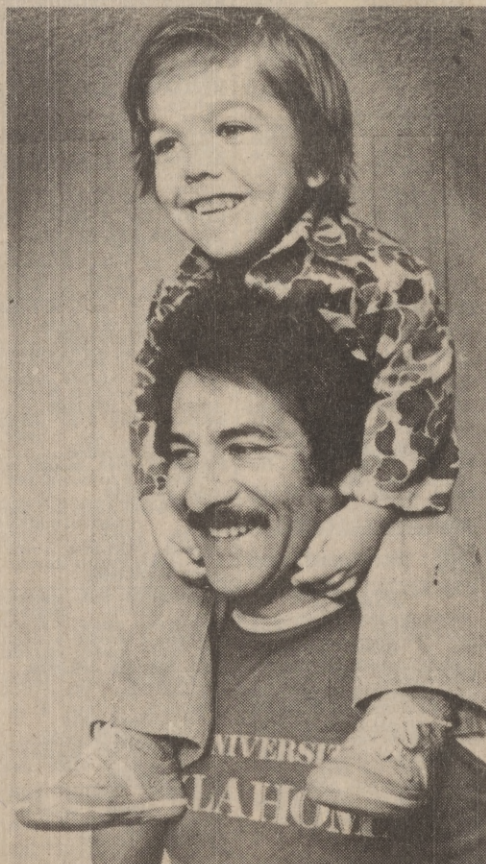
Beautiful, bur-  
nished Victorian,  
velvet w/rolled  
75.00

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LA Times Photos

Brian Luna,  
above left,  
playing cards  
with a friend,  
says: 'I'm just like  
everyone else,  
I'm just littler.'



Right, Brian gets  
a ride on  
shoulders of his  
father, Alex Luna,  
in their West  
Covina home.



# A short story about little

people



Harriet and Al Stickney have known Robbie, a 12-year-old from Napa, since he was 4.

The Stickneys help parents accept their drawfed children and live normally.



Cindy Mitchell, 22, drove from L.A. for the Little People's Convention, where at least 40 members were expected by this morning.



Baby woman. Puppet. Midget. Muppet. Joy Cambell knows the names. Ditto for Pam Kendall, Marylou Sberna, Harriet and Al Stickney, and Cindy Mitchell.

They're dwarfs. In some cases, the results of new genetic mutations. In all instances, used to the stares, the names. So they came to Hotel El Rancho this weekend to meet and re-meet each other and show who they really are. The occasion was a state convention of Little People of America, a national organization for people 4 feet, 10 inches and under.

"UNTIL YOU CAN look in the mirror and accept yourself and say, 'I am a dwarf,' you won't be in this organization."

Harriet Stickney, 54, has a lot to say about size. She and her husband Al, 50, traveled from San Bruno to do so. Their job with the organization is to counsel parents of dwarfed or very short children. Medicine does not know why it happens. And it usually happens to parents of average height.

"When you find out you have a dwarfed child, it's a difficult time because you blame yourself," says Harriet. "We tell them to accept it and get on with it. What bothers us is that the ones who should be here aren't. They may be hiding away; they haven't accepted themselves or their children."

There could be hundreds of categories of dwarfism, according to Dr. Bagher Sheikholislam, an endocrinologist with the Sacramento Medical Center who would agree with the Stickneys.

"I tell parents to consider the age of the child, not the height," he says. "Short people will have different problems than giants. A dwarf constantly sees him or herself as inferior. That's because many times their feedback has been people treating them as immature, not appropriate for their age. It's the opposite for tall people, who somehow have great expectations of them most of their lives."

**THE AVERAGE HEIGHT** for the American male is 5 feet, 8 inches, and is 5 feet, 4 inches for the female, according to the endocrinologist.

Al Stickney is 4 feet, 6 inches. He's one of the tallest in his organization and usually stands in the back row for picture taking sessions.

"My father was in the Army and we moved around a lot," he recalls. "He was 6 feet tall, my mother was 5 feet, 4 inches. I was the youngest of three. My brother's 6 feet tall, my sister's 5 feet, 7 inches."



Staff Photos by Henry Au

Friends from Southern California, Pam Kendall (left) and Marylou Sberna each deal differently with stares or taunts. Pam gets angry. Marylou uses her sense of humor.

Al says he felt left out at high school dances, but he managed the school sporting team and "earned more athletic letters than anyone else." He knew he wasn't going to be taller. His family was realistic. The world wasn't as kind at first.

"I wanted to be an accountant and went to enroll in a Boston school that guaranteed you a job after graduation. They wouldn't accept me with that stipulation. So I went to aeronautic school and they told me if I could get through it, I could do anything."

Today, he is maintenance planner for United Airlines. Ironically, most members of Little People of America are accountants or bookkeepers, he says.

Harriet was a grade school teacher who used her voice to control children as

tall as she. She believes strides made by the California Association of the Physically Handicapped such as lower water fountains, building access, have helped short people.

"We stand as tall as people in wheelchairs sit."

**MOST OF THE** convention goers had developed what Harriet calls "calluses" to the name calling, the whispers, the elbow pokes.

"I've always been shy," says Pam Kendall, 20, of Indio. "It bugs me when people laugh at me. Sometimes I just can't walk away from it. I get mad. I don't think they'd want people laughing at them. The children are fine — they're open. It's the parents who pull the kids

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# Less is more

'They didn't carry me up hills,

they just walked a little slower'



Extensions on brake and gas pedals are all Joy Campbell needs to make driving her standard-sized car

possible. She also has a small bike for getting around town.



# is to think big

Her husband's greatest thrill happened when he was in high school. Albaugh loved athletics, but because of his size, or rather, his lack of it, he usually ended up taking care of the sports equipment.

"One time our basketball

team was way ahead of a rival school," Albaugh recalled. "So to put a little salt in the wound, the coach sent me in an I played the last two minutes.

"That was great!" said the little guy.

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The Sacramento Bee — Friday, February 6, 1981

## Reaganite Gets Short Shift In Job Freeze

By Bud Newman  
Cox News Service

WASHINGTON — At 3-feet, 3-inches tall, Bobby Van Etten is a small person with a big battle on his hands: the president of the Little People of America is taking on the president of the United States.

Like hundreds of others who were hired for federal jobs after Nov. 4, Van Etten — a Republican who voted for Reagan — moved to Washington only to find himself unemployed, the victim of President Reagan's federal hiring freeze.

As promised during his campaign, Reagan's first act after taking office Jan. 20 was to freeze all federal hiring. But there was a kicker that has made life miserable for Van Etten and hundreds of others in the same position: Reagan made the freeze retroactive to election day, Nov. 4.

Now Van Etten, 31, is battling the bureaucracy for a special hardship exemption allowing him to keep the \$32,000-a-year electrical engineer's job at the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board. The board notified him in writing Dec. 31 that he had been hired and he accepted immediately, he said.

The hardship exemption Van Etten seeks has nothing to do with the fact that he's short and partially disabled. It has to do with money.

Based on the letter confirming his employment, Van Etten borrowed nearly \$3,000 to move from Orlando, Fla., to Washington. He sold many of his possessions in Florida and, when he got to Washington Jan. 20 — Inauguration Day



AP photo

### Van Etten: jobless in Washington.

— he quickly found an apartment and signed a one-year lease.

Then he went into the office Jan. 26 to start work, setting minimum federal requirements for devices that help deaf and blind people overcome communication barriers. But before he could even begin, the job was over.

Van Etten said he supports the hiring freeze idea but feels it should not have been retroactive all the way back to November without some early announcement by Reagan of his intentions.

Van Etten was elected last year as president of the 3,000-member Little People of America Inc., "an organization of, by and for individuals of short stature that through fellowship finds solution to the unique challenges of little people."



By MARJORIE WELLINGS

The notion that a three foot, eight-inch woman lives with a handicap might occur to some people, but for Joy Campbell, a little adult living independently and successfully in a big peoples' world, that's not the reality.

An achondroplastic dwarf whose height has never slowed her down, Campbell is a small whirlwind, wishing to be treated just like anyone else. To this laughing, outgoing person who calls herself a "country woman," life is a great adventure.

The 28-year-old Campbell holds down a responsible job, keeps house for herself, has acted in television plays, and has twice traveled Europe alone.

She credits two loving and sensible parents, Herb and Helen Campbell of Esparto, for raising her just as they did their four other children, giving her home responsibilities, and helping her physically only when it was absolutely necessary.

"My mother is one of those people who believes that if you try to live by Christian principles, everything will turn out all right.

"I couldn't have asked for a better childhood.

"They didn't carry me up hills. They just walked a little slower."

Campbell has been a familiar sight in Davis as she cheerfully negotiates such architectural barriers as the Davis Post Office steps. Although she drives a standard-sized car, her tiny bicycle has 16 inch wheels with a frame only 14 inches high.

Naturally small children notice her, and Campbell is amused at some of the uninhibited remarks they make.

"Look at the baby woman!" is one she's heard several times.

"How come she's so little?" is another, or, to her parents, "Did you cut her off?"

"Most of the time they speak to me directly," Campbell says. "Does your mother know you wear lipstick?" "Do you have batteries?"

"Their imaginations just go on and on," she remarks, laughing heartily. "one of my dwarfed friends was asked, 'If you're a puppet, where are your strings?'"

Less amusing to Campbell is the response of some of the children's parents. One of them explained to her child, "She's sort of like a human."

"I just kind of laughed," Campbell says, adding that while most Davis parents seem to know how to properly explain her to their kids, she's put off by those who react emotionally and angrily to what, for the child, is an honest and valid question.

"It annoys me when parents yell 'Shut up!' at their kids or take a pop at them."

didn't really miss the fact that she wasn't dating.

"I was too busy for it to dawn on me."

Much later, when she was 26, Campbell was invited to a high school senior prom by a dwarfed friend in another town.

"He said he could do almost anything by himself, but he was not going to go to his senior prom alone! I went, and we had a wonderful time!"

When Campbell was finishing high school and considering options for her future, one woman kept questioning her about plans in a way that seemed to be stereotyping her.

"Finally I told her, 'Damn it, I'm going to join the circus!' She never asked me again!"

About then Campbell heard that little people were being sought for a television series for children; she sent off a resume and forgot about it. Soon she was called, and traveled alone—making her first commercial flight—to Los Angeles, with a plane change in San Francisco. While there she lived in her own apartment and learned to cook, one of the few jobs she hadn't been given at home.

Returning briefly to Esparto for her graduation and a salutatorian address to her class, Campbell worked in Los Angeles long enough to play such roles as "Orson the Vulture," and a Keystone Cop on a program called "H.R. Pufnstuf." She went back for two more shows in succeeding summers, working with actors such as Jack Wilde, Charles Nelson Reilly, and Martha Raye. She later visited Wilde's family in England, and keeps in touch with Raye, whom she describes as a "generous, warm, super lady."

"Today if I get corny or nutty, people say, 'That's your L.A. coming out.'" She says she greatly enjoyed acting, but could only be lured into it again by a really good part.

Campbell, through her mother a third a generation member of four generations of Romingers in Yolo County, weighed six pounds, five ounces and measured 17 inches when she was born, the third of five children. None of her siblings, nor anyone else in the family, is dwarfed.

Her small size wasn't thought unusual at first, but when her growing didn't keep up with that of other children, and she failed to walk until she was 18 months old, her parents consulted orthopedic specialists who recommended she be put in an institution.

"That just wasn't my parents' way of handling things, and our good old family doctor supported them in their desire to raise me at home just as the others were being raised."

She did dishes, milked the cow, and other "country" things her sister and brothers were doing. Sometimes special jobs fell to her because of her size.

"If we were painting a room, I'd be put to work on the baseboards."

Her father turned a drawer into a pull-out bench for her, but little else in her home was changed. She's always lived in houses built for regular-sized people, and is used to hopping up and down stepladders to work at a counter or get something out of a cupboard.

But like any short person, she reserves the highest shelves for things she seldom uses.

Some things don't get cleaned too well, she says, such as the upper parts of windows and mirrors, and the back of an oven with a door that pulls down in front of her.

"I would love to have a custom kitchen, but then it would be inconvenient for others."

Campbell likes to sit on the floor, and also keeps her car keys there, next to the front door for easy retrieving.

Her automatic-drive car has extensions on the brake and gas pedals, and she gives herself extra braking time because of the greater distance.

Although she makes many of her own clothes, she finds that some women's blouses work well as dresses, and some street-length dresses make perfect long ones for her. She hasn't liked having to wear children's shoes in the past, but says "fashion is making kids' things more grown-up now."

Campbell's upbringing was so normal that she says she didn't notice she was different than other children until she was about 10. She feels now that her brothers were protective of her, but she wasn't aware of it at the time.

Her teen age years were smooth at Esparto High School, where she was student body secretary in her junior year and treasurer as a senior. As a result, she

Taking some of the money she'd earned, Campbell set out for Europe at 20, again by herself. To prepare for her six-week trip, not part of a tour, she "went to the library and read up, talked to people and got advice, and got out maps and train schedules."

Traveling with a back pack, she says she had "a marvelous experience," and felt homesick only when there was a language barrier.

Campbell's only resentment about her achondroplasia came when her friends were getting married and she faced the fact that she'd probably have to work all her life. She doesn't contemplate marriage, particularly to someone not dwarfed, although she has known of a few such marriages that have worked out well. She feels that even when the hazards of childbearing have been overcome, children born to such unions face difficult problems.

She does have an active social life, especially with friends met through the Little People organization, which started in 1957 with 20 members and now has 2,000. Campbell frequently attends the group's conventions and meetings, which are made lively with partying, salmon barbecues, tours of the convention cities, and lots of camaraderie.

But she has many non-dwarfed friends as well. "I'm always glad to get home after nothing but little people."

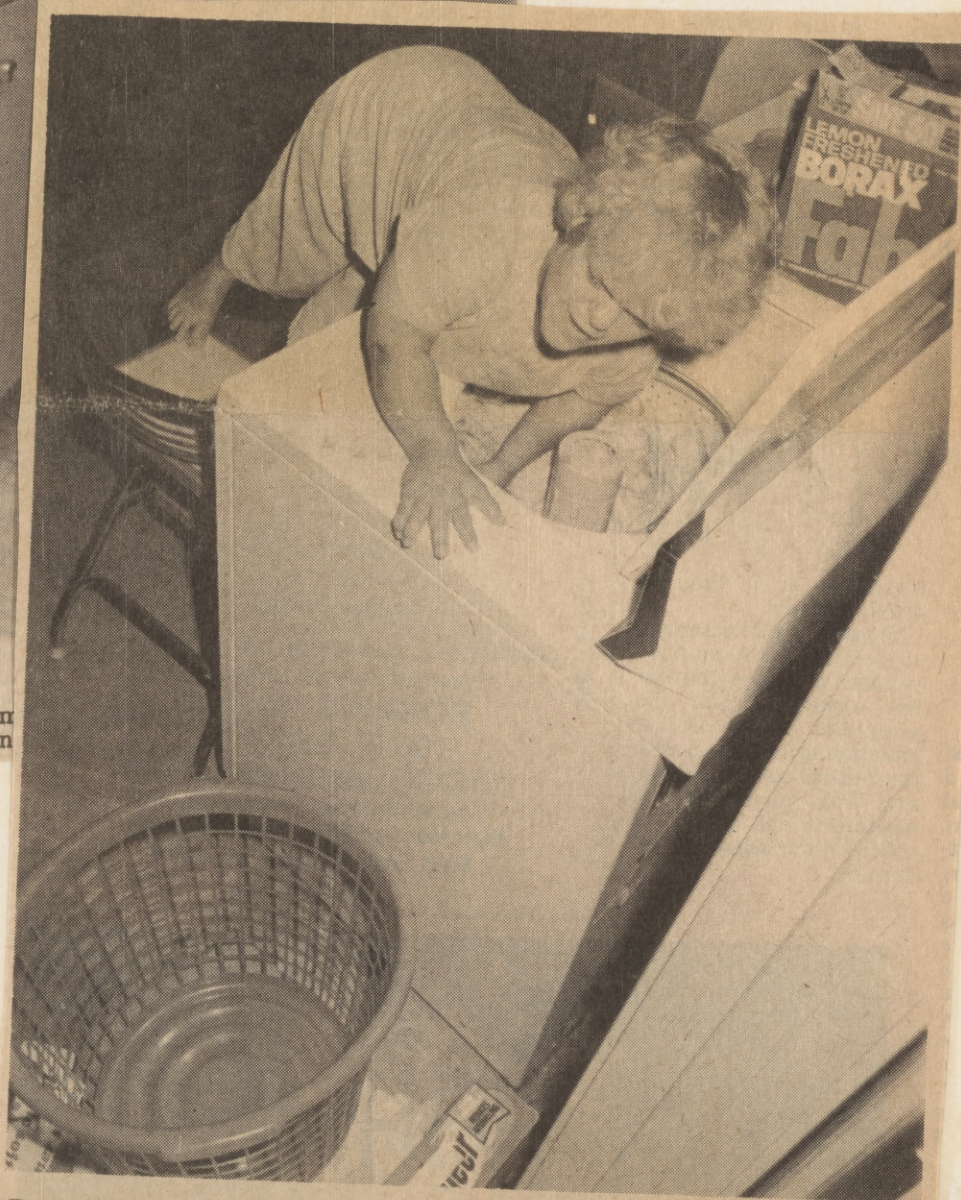
Campbell has little patience with fellow dwarfs who won't try to do as much as possible for themselves. About her own sure-footed, do-it-yourself approach to life, she says,

"It's because I'm a country woman."





Joy Campbell, a 3-foot-8-inch gourmet cook, is used to hopping up and down



Retrieving clothes from the bottom of the washing machine takes some fancy acrobatics.



# Little people learn to deal with world

✓—From Page C1

away who often bother me. But I'm getting better about it."

Pam was adopted when she was 1 year old by a dwarfed couple. She still can remember the day when she was working in a lawyer's office and a client asked if he could shake her hand since he heard touching a dwarf brings good luck. She complied. Today, she works in the insurance department of a large hospital.

"I play raquetball, I skate — I do everything you do, but maybe a little slower. I'm just shorter. People should just think of us as people. Short people."

**PAM HATED** Randy Newman's "Short People" song. She didn't know he intended to point out the awfulness of discrimination by the song. She heard the part about "their little cars go beep, beep, beep," and thought of the small car she drives.

Marylou Sberna, 20, of Palm Springs, is trying to help Pam be as extroverted as she is. At 4 feet, Pam is about two inches taller than her southern California friend.

"I was always popular," says Marylou. "I'm the only dwarf in my family. I have two younger sisters and all of us have always been close. Sure there were bullies in junior high. At our national convention every year, we have rap sessions that help a lot of people. At this point, the only advice I need is everyday love problem advice!"

Marylou uses her sense of humor to deflect cruelty or mere curiosity.

"I was once at this skating rink and this little kid asked where I came from. I told him I was the eighth dwarf of 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.' I could see him run over to his mother to tell her."

Pam would have liked to have been a police officer. Marylou is still a college student studying psychology and doesn't think her height should have anything to do with her assuming the career she wants.

**THEY BOTH THINK** about having children. Pam wants a big family and never really thought about the possibility of having dwarfed children if she marries another dwarf. (An endocrinological study a decade ago found that of 23 dwarfed couples, 17 had dwarfed offspring and six had average sized children.) Pam has made up her mind.

"I want children of an average size. Psychological problems can be overcome but I don't want my children to have the physical problems I've had. Right now, though, I date other short people."

Both young women had only average sized friends before they joined Little People of America. So did Joy Campbell, who grew up in Esparto. At 29, the coordinator of the convention appears to be totally at ease with her stature.

"I didn't even know I was dwarfed until I was 10," she says. "I was the middle of five normal sized kids and we were once visiting friends and I was getting into the car. My sister said something like, 'If she wasn't a midget, we wouldn't have to do this (whatever it was)' and it hit me. I looked down and said, 'Oh! That's what it is!' Then I went to the encyclopedia and started looking into it."

**IF JOY'S PARENTS** had listened to a doctor, she would have been locked away. He told them she would advance too slowly and wouldn't be of use, she says. They did the opposite, raising her as their other children. Today, she owns her own condominium, has a dog, a job, and says she's busy and happy.

"I was always popular. I credit the small town and warm family with my adjustment. There were no guys to date so I figured some day maybe I'd find one. I still would rather be alone than with a nerd — tall or short. Too many times people try to fix you up with another dwarf just because of your size, not considering your intelligence."

When Joy was 18, she read that Krofft Production Company was looking for little people to act for a children's TV show. Joy spent two years in L. A. with "H. R. Pufnstuf."

"I always prefer parents letting children ask me their questions than shushing them," she says. "I realize I'll probably always feel like a public relations person for others my size, but that's OK."

**DWARFS USUALLY** get the pity or the freak treatment, they say. Besides the run of the mill back problems they have, they say they're like anybody else.

"I'm not even aware of looking up at people," says Joy. "Only when they really bend down to talk to me am I aware. And then there are the ones who get down on their knees. That I can do without!"



## Dwarfs, midgets in a giant world

# How the little people cope

By Charles Richards

The Associated Press

DALLAS — When sheep buyer Clay Kitchens and his wife took their 16-month-old son to Minnesota's Mayo Clinic in 1932, they expected doctors to repair the boy's cleft palate. They were not expecting a new diagnosis: young Lee was a dwarf.

"Take him home and treat him like you would any other child," doctors advised the Fort Worth couple.

"That's the best advice you could give anybody, for anybody who is handicapped," Kitchens, now 50, said. "Don't assume he can't do something until he's tried it several times."

Kitchens, engineering manager for Texas Instruments' home computer division at Lubbock, is 4-foot-1. He climbed into a chair in a motel room to talk about how he and other little people have learned to cope in a world built for bigger people.

Kitchens served as president of Little People of America from 1964 to 1968. His wife, Mary, who is 3-foot-11, was LPA treasurer from 1970 to 1974. But there was no Little People of America when he was a child, Kitchens said.

"My mother said she would have given her right arm to have had something like that when I was growing up, to help her," he said.

### 4½ feet is tops

The world of little people is made up of dwarfs, who have normal chests and trunks but short legs and feet, and midgets, who are small, but physically well-proportioned.

"The medical profession says any person under 5 feet is technically a dwarf, but most little people will top out at 4½ feet," Kitchens said. "We've got some that are quite a bit smaller than that. There are some who are only about 33 inches tall, and the smallest, I believe, is 29 inches."

Most little people are sensitive about the terms used to describe them.

"There are certain terms that blacks don't want to be called. And you don't refer to people with hearing impairments any more as deaf and dumb," Kitchens said. "So . . . little people. That's just what we are."

### Clothing's a problem

Kitchens said his biggest problem is buying clothing — his chest is as big as an average man's but his arms and legs are short. "I have my own tailor," he said. "I see him once a year, and he's developed enough business that now he comes to all our (LPA) conventions."

Kitchens also cited "artificial barriers" that still exist in American society, such as school regulations requiring all children to attain certain standards of sports prowess.

"There are some states, Louisiana for example, that have height requirements for teachers," he added, noting that Louisiana has lost many teachers of short stature to Texas, which has no such rule.

Some little people furnish their homes with children's furniture, but that's impractical for big guests.



The Associated Press

### Lee Kitchens, 4-foot-1

As for annoying remarks or slights, Kitchens said: "I don't get upset when somebody does something stupid or does it because of a lack of awareness. It's an opportunity to educate that person . . . and sometimes you make a good friend that way."

He and his wife met on a blind date while he was an electrical engineering student at Southern Methodist University and she an art student at Texas Woman's University. Last summer they celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.

Many little people marry, and have children.

"Whether their children will also be little depends," Kitchens said. "Some are short by heredity and some are not. The first time it happens, it's genetic, and it can be hereditary after that. The chances can be anywhere from nil to 100 percent that they'll be little."

Little people sometimes adopt small children who are diagnosed as dwarfs or midgets. Kitchens and his wife did this.



## People

# A Lesson That's Short And Sweet

On the first day of school, **Lois Lamb** told her kindergarten class that "people come in all sizes, shapes and colors."

She really was referring to size, since she is a dwarf, and at 4-foot-1 is about the same size as her 22 pupils at the south Dallas school.

"When I was made by God, he decided I was going to be a little person and teach little people just like you," she said.

Officials of the Dallas Independent School District say Lamb is the first dwarf to teach in Dallas public schools.

"One of the great things about Lamb is that she's more than willing to explain about her size," said her principal, **Melvin Howe**. "She wants to be accepted for what she is as a human being, and that's fantastic."

Lamb explains to the class that she is a dwarf, not a midget, and prefers to be called a "little person."

"Now, can you say that: Mrs. Lamb is a little person?"

"Mrs. Lamb is a little person," the class obediently responds.

"Everybody remember that. Am I something to be afraid of?"

"No," says the class in unison.

Lamb said she thinks she will set an example for the class to show the obstacles a person can overcome.

As she continued her introduction to the class, Lamb asked: "Do you notice anything different about Mrs. Lamb?"

"You're white," said **Martin Guillory**, a student in the all-black class.



"Since I was a child, I always wanted to be a teacher," says Lois Lamb. "It's very important. You're laying the groundwork of their lives." Lamb says she thinks she will set an example for the class to show the obstacles a person can overcome.

AP photo



# THE FORCES BEHIND *JEDI*: MAKING MOVIE HISTORY TOOK LUCAS & CO. TO THE OUTER LIMITS

## Screen

The noise generated by 150 actors and crew members resounded in the cavernous sound stage at Elstree studios outside London. Equipped with cool-air dryers, assistants hovered around Jabba the Hutt and his pig guards, trying to refresh the actors inside the hot, cumbersome costumes. Smoke that was frequently sprayed around to give Jabba's palace "atmosphere" irritated noses and eyes. In the midst of the pandemonium stood director Richard Marquand, nervously sucking in his cheeks. It was just another long, exhausting day in the \$32.5 million-making of *Return of the Jedi*, this summer's monster hit. To throw off the inquisitive during filming, the movie was code-named Blue Harvest. When T-shirts were made up for cast and crew, executive producer and *Jedi* mythmaker George Lucas could not resist adding a tagline: "Horror Beyond Imagination." Asked what he meant, Lucas replied, "That's the making of the movie, not what the movie's about." In the following pages the behind-the-scenes and behind-the-masks people of *Jedi* discuss the frustrations and exhilarations of creating the No. 5 box-office success of all time.

**A**midst all the plot convolutions of who Princess Leia *really* is and who Luke's father *really* was, *Return of the Jedi* is stolen by the Ewoks, 40 little creatures in furry suits. Scaled-down versions of giant Wookiees, the plucky Ewoks reside on a jungle planet in harmony with their environment. The objects of moviegoers' affections, the Ewoks were the inspiration for jokes

on the set of *Jedi*. How does an Ewok get across the road? It woks. What does an Ewok have in its ears? Ewax.

The 66 dwarfs and midgets who played the Ewoks generally kept to themselves during filming. Dwarfs were preferred for the roles because their limbs are not proportional and therefore look less like actors in costumes. There were in fact two separate groups of Ewoks: The English cast shot interiors at Elstree and an American cast did the outdoor sequences in Crescent City, Calif. Ranging from 2'11" to 4'8" in height, many of the little people had worked in the 1981 comedy *Under the Rainbow*, which starred Chevy Chase and Carrie Fisher, and they were known to *Jedi*'s casting directors. When *Jedi* filming began, Fisher exclaimed, "Oh, no, not midgets again."

Always fascinated by anthropology, George Lucas had an active subplot about a Wookiee planet and culture in *Star Wars*, but prior to filming, he cut it out for the sake of pacing. He recycled that notion into *Jedi*'s Ewok society. Lucas wanted to illustrate a lifelong belief that faith in a cause can help people overcome technologically superior opponents. He also wanted the Ewoks to be more approachable than the other aliens in his bestiary. "Keep them a little cuddly, so we want to hug them a little," he advised *Jedi* director Marquand. But when Lucas first saw the Ewok costumes, he



The uncomfortable Ewok costumes were made of foam rubber covered with specially treated cotton and Dacron.



thought they had a case of the "terminal cutes." The performers weren't thrilled, either. Recalls 3'4" Margarita Fernandez, 24, "When we first looked at each other as Ewoks, we thought 'Yuk.' Then they began to grow on us."

An adorable Ewok is also a marketable Ewok. Toys and other spin-offs from *Star Wars* films are a merchandising bonanza, and Lucasfilm has approved some 40 licenses for *Jedi*-related goods. The movie Ewoks were designed with an eye to having the appropriately furry 'n' fuzzy appeal to little consumers. Kenner Products plans to deliver the first shipment of stuffed Ewoks to toy stores late next month in plenty of time for the Christmas shopping season.

**Ewoks Debbie Carrington (left) and Margarita Fernandez vamp in a California redwood forest.**

Although the degree of Ewok cuteness was fine-tuned by makeup artist Stuart Freeborn and his staff, who built them from designs by visual effects director Joe Johnston, some technical problems could not be corrected. To Lucas' disappointment, the eyes and mouths of the Ewoks couldn't move independently, and, as a result, the creatures have a slightly wooden look.

Such flaws are invisible in the Ewoks' most thrilling scene: a rocket-scooter chase through a redwood forest. The effect was achieved with surprising simplicity. It was shot by a cameraman walking through the trees with the film running at a very slow rate of speed. When the film was shown at normal speed, the motion was greatly

accelerated—especially when intercut with shots of the scooters in flight. For some Ewoks, who were paid a minimum of \$298 a day for their troubles, such movie magic was hard to come by. "The costumes were like saunas," says Debbie Carrington, 23. "The wardrobe people were constantly bringing us Gatorade." For 3'10" Debbie, life as an Ewok had a happy ending. On the set she met 5'9" extra Bob Eslick, 21, who played a storm trooper. Last December, after graduating from the University of California at Davis, she moved to Los Angeles with Eslick. "He calls me his Ewok love," she says. Debbie is currently appearing as Alvin the Chipmunk in a traveling show for kids.

"I'm now dancing to disco instead of creeping around on the forest floor," she observes. The most compelling complaint about the Ewoks in *Jedi* is that the audience doesn't see enough of them. Margarita Fernandez, who has appeared as Birdie the Early Bird in McDonald's television commercials, can attest to their popularity. Six months ago, the license plate on her Toyota—EWOK 1—was merely a curious combination of letters. Now, she says, "when I'm driving down the freeway, it almost causes an accident." □

CONTINUED  
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# Little Darling Dagmar

By Betty Cuniberti

When the elevator button is out of reach, when access to the public telephone requires a step ladder — any time the world looks down on Little Darling Dagmar — the three-foot five-inch wrestler looks right back up and spits Chivas Regal in its eye.

Life as a wrestler is not easy, let alone life as a woman dwarf, but Dagmar can handle any role.

"I'm gutsy," she said over a glass of her favorite Scotch. "I go after difficult things. Why did I go into wrestling? I thought it would be a helluva challenge."

Dagmar attacks her life with such fervor that her more average-sized tag team partner, Vicki Williams, occasionally has problems keeping up. Williams herself is not short-suited on guts (she chucked a stable career as a physical education teacher to be a suitcase-carrying participant) she is often overwhelmed by Dagmar's everyday encounters.

"I've seen grown people stare at her and walk right into a telephone pole," said Williams. "Just the other day a driver was looking at her and he turned left—right into another car."

"She doesn't even realize it. I can't believe how many people have no couth. It offends me more than it does her."

Dagmar chuckled at her traveling companion, much the way she always has at those who don't understand. She was born

Katherine Carlton 32 years ago near Winston-Salem, North Carolina, with a dysfunction in her pituitary gland. Her torso grew to normal size while her arms and legs lagged behind.

She comes from a family that included two sisters and a brother. "And I was just as mean

as they were," Dagmar recalled proudly.

She credits her parents with the wisdom to raise her as a normal child.

"I think I had it easy," she said. "Some parents don't accept it. Mine did. To me, just being little is no problem. I just fit

myself right in."

Despite her size, Dagmar developed an affection for sports and "tried to compete" in softball and basketball. Even today, she says she plays a fair game of tennis. "I'm a great ball chaser," she brags.

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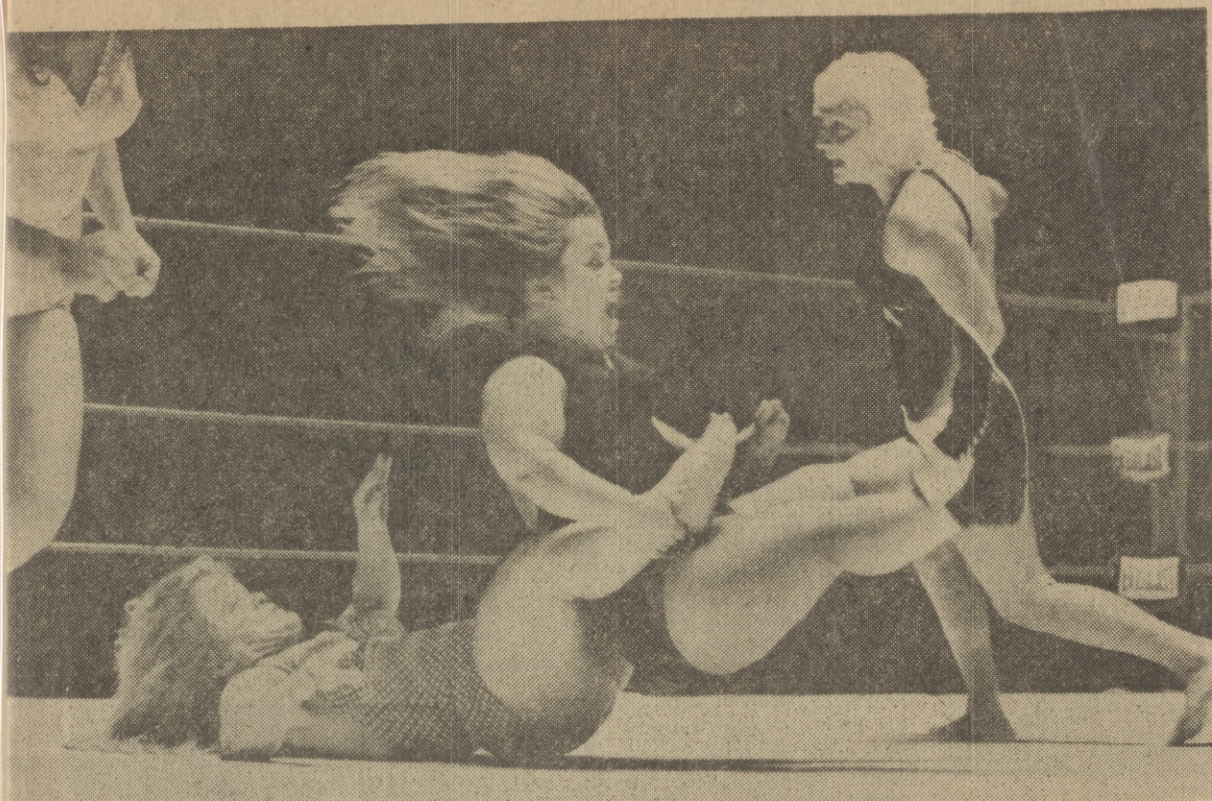


**No frills, no fancy dressing rooms for Dagmar, or any wrestler. Whatever glamour there is has to be found in the ring.**

*Photos by Stephanie Maze*



# The Dagmar's Gutsy



Photos by Stephanie Maze



In the ring, hair and body flying, and out of the ring, staggered by her opponent, Dagmar takes as much as she dishes out. "But you," she tells an interviewer, "I could beat the daylights out of."

"They go home with a helluva surprise," she said.

Dagmar is unsure how long she will remain in the ring. She has been married for two years to a midget commercial artist and they would like a family. But there are still some professional matters Dagmar wants to take care of.

There has never been a championship for midgets, but a tournament is in the planning.

"I know I'm one of the best. But to be recognized as one of the best is one of my life's goals," she said. "I'll put off having a family until that tournament."

Until then she'll remain on the wrestling road, with stopovers at home in North Carolina. She and her husband have an entire kitchen built to small scale. Their car has special extensions on the gas and brake pedals, but they feel their life is close to normal.

"Yeah," Dagmar complains, "I get speeding tickets, just like everyone else."

presentation exploitive.

"Those are publicity pictures," she said. "It doesn't hit them what I really look like until they see me."

Once in the ring, the show continues. Dagmar delights the crowd by running under the referee's legs and biting Williams' tall, Hawaiian opponent in the back of the thigh. The midget wrestlers can be viewed as a sideshow to a

sideshow, but Dagmar's athletic ability, almost hidden by buffoonery, still is apparent.

She is quick, precise and powerful.

"I could beat the living daylights out of you," she points out to her interviewer. "But I couldn't beat Vicki."

Dagmar is not bothered by the fans who come to see a freak show.









**Casting An Equal Shadow**



You're just an alien in an over-sized world when  
you're a four-foot dwarf.

## CASTING AN EQUAL SHADOW

... living in an apartment where you can't reach the controls on the stove.

Or having to take a stool with you to the laundromat because you can't get your clothes in or out of the top-loading washers.

These and dozens of other inconveniences fill the lives of dwarfs every day.

"We learn to always think ahead," said Al Stickney, a four-foot-six-inch aircraft maintenance planner for United Air Lines. "When we're grocery shopping we have to plan how we put things in our cart because we can't reach the bottom. Small items go in the baby's seat."

There are more than 50 types of dwarfism. They can be divided into two major categories: proportionate short stature, in which the body proportions are normal, and disproportionate short stature, in

Story By Sunny Merik  
Photos By Cap Carpenter

which the limbs are short relative to the body or vice versa.

Dwarfism is caused by either a mutated gene, or a lazy pituitary gland. It is not hereditary.

Four-foot-two-inch Harriet Stickney worked as an elementary school teacher for several years before marrying and moving to the Bay Area.

"I remember the amusement I experienced in high school," she says. "In those days, every girl had to take charm class. They taught you how to sit and walk and how to get in and out of a car. I'd just laugh when my turn came because there is no way I can climb in or out of a car with charm."

One of Harriet's current amusements is the mirror level in public restrooms. "I can only see my bangs. I joke about having the best combed bangs in town."

Problems with men's public restrooms are a bit more serious. Urinals are not always designed with extremely short people in mind.

No one is certain about how many short-statured people (as they prefer to be called) there are nationwide.

"It isn't asked on census reports," Harriet says. "And lots of people don't want to admit that they are, or that a member of their family is a dwarf."

▶ ▶ ▶

*Reaching the coin slot on a telephone or food items in a supermarket are daily problems to dwarfs like Al and Harriet Stickney.*







# Dwarfs . . .



Since dwarfism is not hereditary, average-sized parents can have a dwarfed child, or dwarf parents can have an average-sized child.

Joe and Delores Vercellino have an averaged-sized son, even though they are both short-statured.

"Our son is 11," Delores says. "And we have difficulties when we're out in public. He's uncomfortable because strangers have made comments about the size difference between us." Delores is three-foot-eight, while Joe is four feet tall. "But I think things will mellow out a little as our son grows older."

Delores feels she's treated as most average-sized people are treated. "Except for children. They always comment on how small I

am," she says. "In the grocery store and places like that they come up and ask me why I'm so short. I say, 'God made me little.' They stop and think, and usually react alright. They probably think that's logical."

Delores worked for years as a manicurist. Joe works for United Air Lines.

"During the war the men got into aircraft maintenance because they could get into places where average-sized men couldn't," Delores says. "That really opened up job opportunities. Before that it was difficult getting jobs. You know, people thought that because we were physically short, we were probably a little short on brains too. But attitudes have changed."

She paused, then added, "A few years back people thought we

from older people. "They pat us on the head and say, 'Gee you're little,' as though we don't already know that," Al says. "Or, 'Gee you're cute'."

Both Harriet and Al have been national officers of LPA. They actively promote better understanding of short-statured people through personal appearances on TV or radio talk-shows.

"Only three per cent of our people are in entertainment," Al says, "Yet everyone seems to think if we're dwarfs, we're in entertainment. Actually, most of us are accountants or bookkeepers. We also have artists, administrators, teachers, doctors, engineers, TV repair people, and so on. We work in almost every occupational field imaginable."

all belonged in the circus. But it's better now. We have regular jobs, regular lives."

Two of Delores' pet peeves are unreachable elevator buttons, and towels in public bathrooms. "They're usually too high for me to reach."

"We learn to be nonconformists from an early age," Harriet says. "We're constantly having to adapt to an over-sized environment."

"You can't make any blanket statement about little people," Al Stickney contends. "We're all different individuals. About the only generalization you can make is that we're short. And we live in two worlds."

One of those worlds is grossly over-sized.









## Little Peoples' philosophy:

By Karren Mills

OWATONNA, Minn. (AP) — In a world where just about everything is made to suit average-sized people, a dwarf has little need to join an aerobics class to stay in shape. It takes at least twice the effort to climb stairs and twice as many steps to get anywhere.

"But sitting down evens us all out," says Charles Bedow, who has worked with the Little People of America Inc. for 24 years to help increase public awareness of dwarfism.

Bedow became involved in the organization three years after it was formed in 1957 by television and movie personality Billy Barty and 20 others in Reno. Little People now has more than 4,000 members nationwide, all under 4 feet 10 inches tall.

Bedow is a former president, vice president and treasurer of Little People and now does informational mailings for the organization, which has headquarters in Owatonna and

in San Bruno, Calif.

There are about 100 different kinds of dwarfs, says Bedow, who works as a supervisor for Federated Insurance Companies. Several diseases and disorders can cause short stature, which may be accompanied by a wide range of other physical disabilities, including deformed limbs and spines. Many dwarfs must undergo leg straightening operations and back surgery.

However, Bedow maintains that the biggest problem faced by people of small stature is the way they are perceived by others.

"People don't know how to approach us," says Bedow, who at 4-foot-6 is tall for a dwarf. "Since the public isn't too aware of us, they have a more stand-offish approach."

For himself, Bedow says dwarfism is mostly an inconvenience.

"If you've never had height, you'll never miss what you don't have," he says. "Asking how it feels to be short is like asking how it feels to be a brunette."

The Bedow family lives in a mid-

dle-class residential area of Owatonna, a town of 18,600 about 70 miles south of Minneapolis.

"Our friends are average-size people," he says. "Our house is not scaled down. We live in an average-sized world."

But Bedow, 50, acknowledges there have been some painful times. His two children, 17-year-old Jill and 12-year-old Jack, face many of the same prejudices he worked to conquer years ago.

"If you can go through school without getting too discouraged, it helps," Bedow says. "School is very traumatic. Everything is 'How attractive am I compared to the others?'"

"The seventh grade through the senior year are the most devastating. Back in college, nobody gives a rip again. You're there for an education."

Bedow and his wife, Sally, 38, also a dwarf, worked hard to prepare their children for the curiosity and possible prejudice they might encounter.





Left, Charles Bedow sits under a picture of his father.

Associated Press  
'We live in an average-sized world,' says Charles Bedow, standing with son Jack, 12, and wife Sally, in their kitchen.



# Sitting down evens us all out

On the first day of kindergarten, Mrs. Bedow says, their daughter had no trouble handling the curiosity.

"She stood up when the children were introducing themselves and said, 'My name is Jill Bedow. The reason I'm so short is because I'm a dwarf. If you have any questions about that, please see me after class.'"

Bedow, whose father was one of 11 children and the first dwarf in his family, says he and his wife had about a 50 percent chance of having average-sized children.

"Like anybody else, we hoped they would be average size, but they weren't," he says. "I don't consider myself abnormal and I don't consider them abnormal either."

That philosophy has been passed on to the children. Jill learned to drive as soon as she was old enough to get a license and Jack will do the same, Bedow says. The family car has foot pedal extensions.

Jill plans to go to college and become a special education teacher. Jack loves athletics and plays on a

community hockey team, although he must play with children much younger because of his size. Back in his father's day, Bedow says, most dwarfs ended up as circus performers or were hidden away by their families.

"My father went into the circus when he was 16. He was more or less coerced into it because his parents thought there was big money in it," says Bedow, who traveled the Ringling Bros. circuit with his parents during the first few years of his life. His father died of a cerebral hemorrhage at age 46 after being thrown from an elephant.

Today, Bedow says, "There are dwarfs who are farmers, teachers, accountants, office professionals, medical lab workers, salespersons and clothing designers. There are two lawyers that I know, one soon to be a doctor, another who puts seams on pipelines."

"There are engineers, draftsmen. There's a county clerk in west Texas who's a dwarf. And many are in entertainment."

Bedow says marriages between two dwarfs tend to be more successful than marriages between a dwarf and an average-sized person. That's another area where the Little People of America has been especially helpful, he says. The annual conventions, with events for the entire family.

"If you are shopping for a husband or a wife, you've got all year to do it. At the Little People convention, you've got a week," says Bedow, who met his wife at a convention in Phoenix, Ariz., 20 years ago. "Most of us do meet at conventions or through organization meetings."

The conventions also offer workshops on medical, educational and social topics associated with dwarfism and enable dwarfs to exchange such practical information as where they can have special clothing made.

"I have to have my suits tailored," Bedow says. "It cost me as much to have a suit made as it does Kareem Abdul-Jabbar."



# 'Squirt' may be little, but his philosophy

By JOHN PLATERO  
The Associated Press

TAMARAC, Fla. — Bill Albaugh doesn't mind one bit when he's teased about his short stature. He only hopes that if you're going to give him a nickname, you'll call him "Squirt."

That's easily explained. For 33 years, he's been the living trademark for a soft drink bearing that name.

Albaugh is what the uninformed refer to as a "midget" or "dwarf," but like the thousands afflicted with a quirk in the human growth process, he prefers being called a "little person."

"You kind of learn to accept the teasing," says the jovial 4-foot-7-inch Albaugh, who was born in Mingo Junction, Ohio. "The only people who are cruel are those who are ignorant. But 'little people' learn to develop a sense of humor; otherwise, life would be tough."

He admits his career with Squirt & Co. began as a novelty because of the coincidence with its name and his size. But, his knack for salesmanship proved to be of double value for his employer. He now travels three weeks of every month, not only as a "living trademark," but also to help train salesmen, solve account problems and handle public relations.

"We're very fortunate to have Bill with us," said J.W. Brookes, the company's executive vice president, from his office in Holland, Mich., "not only because of the clever twist between his size and our product, but because he is very able. He's an unusual, sensitive person and one of our most experienced salesmen."

At home, Albaugh is a veritable giant standing next to his wife, Marie. He teases that he's grown seven inches during their 23 years of marriage while she's still 3-foot-11.

The two are very active in helping other



Bill "Squirt" Albaugh

AP photo

"little people." Albaugh founded the South Florida Mini-Gators 10 years ago, and the group now has more than 50 members.

"We help each other on where to buy clothing or shoes and things like that," explained Mrs. Albaugh. "After all, it's not easy to find a cocktail dress for someone 3-foot-11."

The Mini-Gators also tackle more serious problems — like helping parents cope with the shock of learning their child is a "little person."

"'Little people' also have a problem accepting themselves," said Albaugh. "Sometimes they are told they can't do anything and then they believe it and hide from the world."

The Albaughs are good examples that being small is detrimental only if one lets it become so. "We've led a normal and very good life," said Mrs. Albaugh. And their home is no different from anyone else's.

"People think everything will be little in our house," said Mrs. Albaugh, "but our friends and relatives aren't small. It would be uncomfortable for them if everything was made to accommodate us."

The only concession Mrs. Albaugh allows herself is a small ladder she uses in the kitchen. "That's the only exercise I get," she laughed, "going up and down that ladder."

Albaugh's only complaint with life is that much is denied "little people."

"There's no reason, for example, why 'little people' can't serve in the armed forces. There are plenty of desk jobs we could do. It's part of the old myth that the only place for 'little people' is in the circus."

But, they both also find some humor in being small.

"One child saw me in the supermarket and told his mother, 'Look, Mommy, that lady shrunk'," Mrs. Albaugh said with a chuckle.



# Meet the real 'E.T.': All 40 pounds of her

In real life, E.T. is Tamara De Treaux, a 22-year-old actress from San Leandro who stands less than a yard tall, weighs 40 pounds, wears blouses as dresses and sings for a living. "I just put on the suit and it fit," she says of the outfit for the stranded-on-Earth extraterrestrial in the movie "E.T." "It's very tight. Ever wrap yourself in cellophane?" Director Steven Spielberg hired De Treaux after he saw her photo in a newspaper. "My height freaked him out, and he didn't know I had training," said De Treaux, who studied acting at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. In the film, however, acting was limited to "my cute Daffy Duck waddle. I asked to read for the voice, but they wanted it mechanical," she said. "I didn't make a lot of money. Who knew I'd be the all-time smash?"



UPI photo

When the real E.T. stands up, she is less than a yard high.



## Big promise

The Little People of America are in Philadelphia this weekend not only to celebrate the bicentennial of the Constitution but also "to claim the promise of the Constitution that no

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person will be denied the equal protection of the law," says Vice President **Harry J. McDonald**. Convention delegates have their choice of 24 seminars, which cover such topics as employment, education, family planning, self-defense and social interaction, the dwarf in art and literature, and marriage to an average-size spouse.



Actor Billy Barty coaches basketball at the Little People convention.  
Associated Press



# A doctor leads dwarves to normal life

By REBECCA KOLBERG

BALTIMORE (UPI) — The slap of a frustrated father almost cost a little boy his life a decade ago, but the near-tragedy moved a doctor to devote himself to a strange and trying medical speciality — the "repair" of dwarves.

"I got my first dwarf patient in January 1968 — and I didn't even know it at first," said Dr. Steven Kopits, who has performed 1,400 life-saving operations on about 800 dwarves since then.

"A little blond-haired boy named Jay came into my office, paralyzed from the waist down," the Johns Hopkins Hospital orthopedic surgeon recalled. "He couldn't undress fast enough so his father slapped him in the face. The little boy collapsed instantly and became a quadriplegic."

Genetic tests showed that, unknown to his parents and physicians, the 4-year-old was a dwarf and had weakened neck vertebrae that could be easily dislocated by a sharp blow to the head.

"Even though I didn't know anything about dwarves — and there wasn't much more written about how to treat them — I went ahead and operated on Jay," Kopits said. "He walked out of the hospital a few months later."

Kopits said dwarves' lives can be also threatened in a more insidious fashion, with the vertebrae gradually pinching the spinal cord and slowly shutting down respiration.

"As an orthopedic surgeon, I grew interested in dwarves because they are so disabled and there was no help. They really had nothing going for them," the 45-year-old surgeon said. "I am not interested in dwarves because they are small and an item of curiosity. I could care less if they were green or blue, fat or tall."

Kopits' brand of reconstructive surgery relies on basic orthopedic techniques adapted to the unique proportions and distortions of dwarves' bodies. He uses no artificial joints — preferring instead to realign the dwarves' bowed legs and twisted necks by cutting, realigning and fusing bone.

As word spread among "little people" about the life-saving procedures Kopits dared to perform, his caseload grew to include patients from

all 50 states and 17 foreign countries. He has a 22-month backlog of patients.

"Dr. Kopits is one of a kind. He's pioneering in a field where other physicians haven't had any success or had any courage to try," said Jan DuGoff, whose son, Benji, 3, is able to walk thanks to the doctor's innovative techniques.

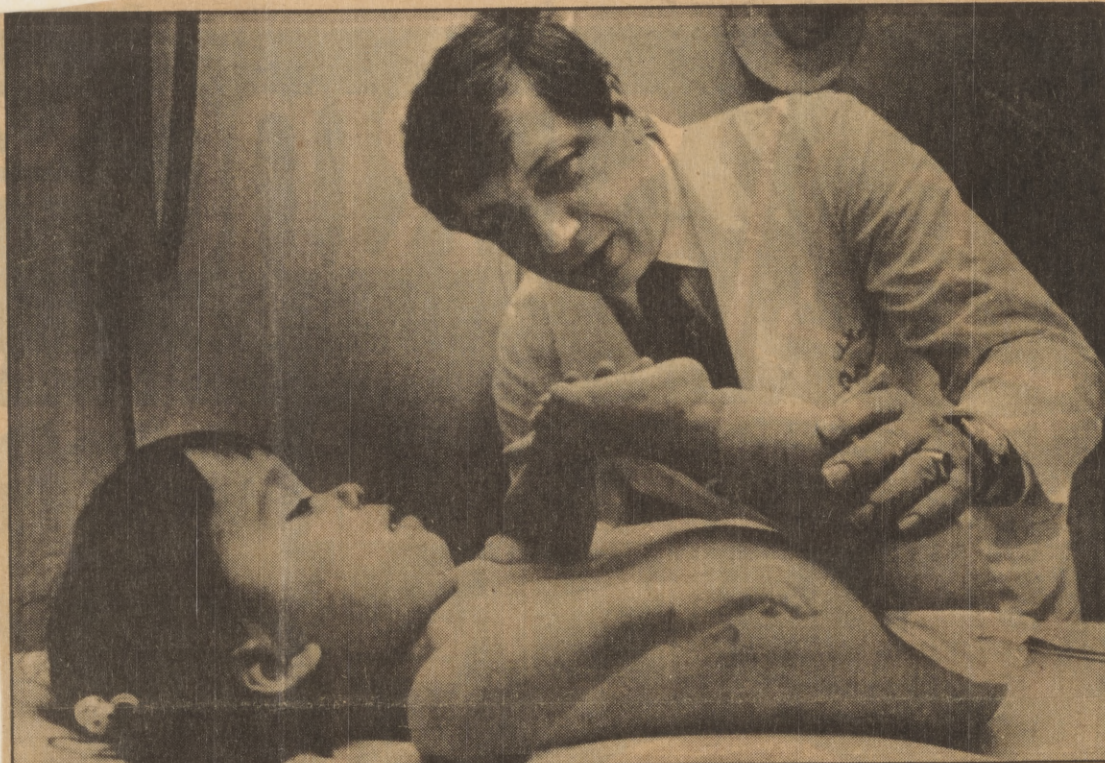
Benji, a bright-eyed little boy who stands just 30 inches tall, is a diastrophic dwarf — one of the 34 varieties of deformities that account for the approximately 30,000 dwarves in the United States.

"Now he's about the most active child in the world, really spunky to say the least," said DuGoff.

Kopits, a native of Budapest, Hungary, who came to the United States in 1964, calls 19-year-old Mary Prillaman of Vero Beach, Fla. his "biggest success."

"When I first saw Mary four years ago she was very weak, barely able to walk. All I could think is that she was going to die no matter what I did," Kopits recalls. "But I just took my set of orthopedic procedures and started methodically trying to handle an impossible situation."





**Sheri Lacy, 4, is examined by Dr. Steven Kopits at Johns Hopkins Hospital. Kopits has devoted himself to reconstructive surgery for dwarves.**



UPI Photos

**Dr. Steven Kopits rubs noses with Benji DuGoff, 3, who is able to walk because of the doctor's innovative techniques.**



## People

# Barty's work also includes the practical

Star of 'Willow' helps other  
little people find solutions

From Bee news services

**Billy Barty** has long been one of the busiest "little people" in show business (his most recent role was in "Willow") but he's also busy working on behalf of other midgets and dwarfs. In 1957 he established the Little People of America and in 1975 he started the Billy Barty Foundation. "We raise money for scholarships, vocational training, medical direction, family counseling, clothing, car-driving extensions and other areas that are of particular interest to little people," he said. "If we don't have answers, we send them to the right agencies to find solutions." Barty says his group helped **George Lucas** line up enough little people for "Willow." Stairs, ramps and other conveniences were built on location for the actors. "It's always wonderful when a large group of little people get together," Barty said, "because we have so much in common to talk about, and it usually means accommodations are made to make life easier for us."



Billy Barty helped find the nearly 250 little people for George Lucas' movie 'Willow.'

The Associated Press



# Gene defect that causes dwarfism discovered

United Press International  
SAN FRANCISCO —

In research that could hold significant implications for other genetic studies, scientists have found a gene defect that causes dwarfism, a researcher reported Thursday.

"We are very excited about this significant finding. Until now no one had any idea what caused dwarfism," said Dr. Charles Strom, assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Chicago.

"This is also the first time a genetic defect has been discovered in a disease in which the biochemical problem was not yet known."

In such genetic disorders as sickle cell anemia, he said, scientists knew which specific gene was causing the problem, cloned the defective gene, then conducted laboratory research.

"We knew only this is a genetic disease of the cartilage. Until now no one knew what the defective gene was. We found the gene and the defect," Strom reported at a meeting of the American Pediatric Research Society for Pediatric Research.

He cautioned treatment was still many years away.

"This, I hope, is going to spur others to look at sporadic dominant disease with gene problems," Strom said in an interview. "people in the

field had hoped this type of research would be fruitful. This is the first time it bore fruit."

Strom found the defect in a 16-month-old Chicago girl suffering from achondroplasia, a sometimes-lethal defect in cartilage formation that affects 1 in 26,000 Americans.

The condition, the most common of 30 types of dwarfism, is characterized by short stature, large head, arthritis, inability to fully extend the arms and legs and, often, spinal cord vent paralysis.

As is true in 90 percent of such cases, the baby had normal parents.





Eddie Adams

**I**n a society that often equates tallness with physical attractiveness and other positive attributes, being extremely short can be a serious handicap

Dr. Steven Kopits surrounded by friends and patients at a recent Little People of America convention in Columbia, Md.

# A Doctor Fights For The Little People



**A**S WEDDING PICTURES

go, the photographs that Dr. Steven Kopits proudly spreads out on a table in his Baltimore clinic are traditional and—at first glance—unremarkable. The bride, clad in a full-length white gown, is radiant and beautiful as she walks down the aisle on the arm of her handsome bridegroom, cuts the wedding cake and celebrates the joyous occasion.

Then Kopits hands me another set of pictures—photographs of a deformed dwarf child. This was the bride, Ellen Highland, before 85 hours of surgery. In 22 separate operations, Dr. Kopits rebuilt her from the ground up and assured a future for a woman who will never grow more than 40 inches tall.

"This," says Kopits, gesturing to the two sets of photographs, "is what my life and work is all about. If Ellen had not sought help, she probably would be dead by now or at best paralyzed with severe deformities. Now she can live a totally normal life."

The Hungarian-born Kopits, 49, is thought to be the only physician in the world who devotes himself entirely to the orthopedic problems of dwarfs, employing his surgical skills to prevent and correct the often severe bone deformities that cause progressive crippling in many forms of genetic dwarfism. Without skilled surgery, many dwarfs are condemned to lives of pain. Some die, often in their teens or 20s, from respiratory and other complications.

"Little people have to overcome an adversity that we can hardly fathom," Kopits says in his softly accented English. "When I first began studying dwarfism I found a group of patients who were totally neglected, where the level of medical knowledge was abysmally low. Now I'm frantically trying to bring the treatment up to par with the rest of medicine."

In a society that often equates tallness with brains, authority and physical attractiveness, being extremely short can be a serious handicap. The characters portrayed by America's most successful dwarf actors—Herve Villechaize, formerly of *Fantasy Island*, and Billy Barty, a TV personality—are video extensions of traditional dwarf roles as comic or cute foils for lead characters. The country's estimated 25,000 dwarfs are among the most visible members of society due to their stature; yet, ironically, they remain one of the least known. Ernie and Dolores Ott, a dwarf couple with two young children, live in Wheaton, Md. Their experiences are typical. "Since childhood and for the

next 20 years, people would ask me seriously when I was going to join the circus," recalls Ernie Ott, who holds an M.B.A. degree in finance from Duke University and works as a financial analyst for IBM. "You are constantly reminded you are different, and it's an incredible obstacle for some." Steven Kopits and his longtime associate, Diane Davis, hear such things almost daily from patients and their families, who come from all over the U.S. and 33 foreign countries. In 15

BY MICHAEL

years, Kopits has performed 2500 operations on dwarfs, often using techniques that he pioneered. His surgical schedule is booked for the next three years. Despite his 80-hour work weeks, there is never enough time to accomplish everything. Dr. Kopits and Davis, a nurse, strive to provide the finest care possible for their patients, regardless of their ability to pay. He makes a special effort to hold clinics at national and regional meetings of Little People of America and even schedules clinical consultations at airports when he has layovers between planes. His salary as an associate professor at The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine is less than what he could earn in private practice. He gives patients his home telephone number and invites them to call anytime. "There is a saying that a physician should not become emotionally involved with patients," he observes. "I don't think you can be a good physician un-

**SATCHELL**

*continued*



## LITTLE PEOPLE/continued

less you become emotionally involved. I have had a medical colleague describe me as an oddball who treats weirdos. That's how some people regard dwarfs, but I am totally, utterly captivated by these little people and their courage."

Kopits' involvement with little people began in 1968 when he was chief pediatric orthopedist at Johns Hopkins. Called to the emergency room to examine a 3-year-old boy who had been paralyzed after a slap in the face from his father, Kopits discovered that the child was a dwarf—a fact unknown to the parents. Soon after, Kopits dropped by a Baltimore convention of Little People of America and was touched by the sight of some two-dozen dwarfs—many disabled—hobbling and shuffling around on crutches and in wheelchairs.

"It had a big emotional impact," he remembers. "I thought, in this day of modern medicine, how can this be?" Delving into medical textbooks left him even more disturbed because there were few answers and little information of real value. Kopits began seeking out dwarf patients as he explored and perfected new surgical techniques, accumulating a body of research that he hopes to publish.

A group of supporters also launched the Little People's Research Fund, headquartered at Baltimore's St. Joseph Hospital. Says Peggy Albert, the research fund's executive director: "Every week I get calls from desperate parents with horror stories about what's happening to their children. A mother from Georgia called recently—she has an 8-year-old dwarf daughter—and told me that their doctor was trying to cure the child's bowed legs by having them broken and reset each year. It's tragic how much ignorance remains on this subject."

Two basic conditions cause dwarfism. So-called pituitary dwarfs lack growth hormones, and they remain tiny. In the past, these well-proportioned but short-statured persons were known as "midgets," but this term is now regarded as insulting. Growth hormones have helped eliminate much pituitary dwarfism.

The most common cause of dwarfism is genetic mutations that cause bones to form and grow improperly, resulting in disproportionate bodies. There are more than 80 different syndromes responsible for these bone dysplasias. The condition is often accompanied by severe bowing of the legs, hip problems, clubfeet and problems with the heart, spine and respiratory system. These so-called genetic dwarfs are the focus of Dr. Kopits' work. Their parents tend to be of normal size, incidentally.

At 8 a.m. on a recent Monday, I watch Kopits operate on Stephen Hatch, 15, who lives in American Fork, near Provo, Utah. Stephen has pseudo-achon-

droplasia. His head and torso are normally proportioned but his legs are stunted and bowed and his arms are short.

"When Stephen was 11, we took him to a Little People's convention in Reno and met Dr. Kopits," says his mother, Beth Hatch. "We watched a girl who was as straight as a stick and was actually dancing. Dr. Kopits said the girl had been like Stephen before he had operated on her."

Kopits had realigned Stephen's hips two weeks earlier. The next task was to straighten his legs. This Monday, the goal is to straighten Stephen's right leg, which takes eight hours. Before setting the hips and legs in a new plaster cast, Kopits invites me to examine the two legs. The right one is now discernibly straighter—and also about three inches longer.


The next day's schedule has Dr. Kopits booked to see patients from Maryland, Texas, Alabama, West Germany and Israel. Pat Hutson, who has traveled from Bonn, West Germany, with her daughter, says of Kopits: "He's our child's link to a more hopeful world. He will give her a future."

Gordon and Virginia Hendrickson of Rochester, N.Y., have brought their 16-year-old daughter Sheri to Baltimore to see Kopits.

"She's been examined by six specialists," explains Mrs. Hendrickson. "They're baffled. They don't know what to do, and they can't help Sheri. She's been taking 10 codeines a day for the pain, and the pills aren't helping. We heard about Dr. Kopits, and we felt this was our only chance."

After a lengthy examination of the girl, Kopits is clearly touched. Her pains, he explains, are probably not orthopedic in origin but may be related to her dwarfism.

"I'm just a poor orthopedist from East Baltimore," Kopits says with a wry smile, "but I want you to know that I care about you, and I'm going to do everything in my power to help you get well." He then gives the Hendricksons his home telephone number, tells them to call if there are any problems overnight and arranges to have their daughter admitted to the hospital for tests. As the family leaves his office, Kopits bends his lanky frame down, hugs his new patient and kisses her on the cheek. She is clearly smitten.

Kopits watches the family leave and shakes his head. "Six doctors, and none could help her," he observes. "It's tragic really. All the time, I see the desperation of good physicians who can't do anything for these patients. That is what keeps me going." 

*For more information, write to: Peggy Albert, Little People's Research Fund, St. Joseph Hospital, Dept. P, 80 Sister Pierre Drive, Towson, Md. 21204.*



## People

# Little People have big convention

Before the Little People of America began arriving in Philadelphia for their annual convention, carpenters built steps so they could reach the hotel registration desks and waiters were told not to put salt and pepper shakers out of reach in the middle of tables. But the organization is a self-help group and its members are focusing on what they can do for themselves, from basketball tournaments to seminars for doctors. The Little People — they prefer that name to dwarfs — started out as a social organization in 1957, but it is much more than that now, according to the group's vice president, **Harry J. McDonald**. "The people of LPA will be coming to Philadelphia not only to celebrate the bicentennial of the United States Constitution, but also to claim the promise of the Constitution that no person will be denied the equal protection of the law," McDonald said of the convention that is to last until Saturday. The group estimates that 80,000 dwarfs — people 4 feet, 10 inches or less — live in the United States. Their organization has 4,000 members, and McDonald predicted 1,000 people, including members plus their average-size relatives, would be at the convention. The sporting events are fairly new, centering around softball and basketball. New sports included swimming, golf, table tennis, the 60- and 100- meter runs, the javelin, shot put, discus and powerlifting. "We don't set any Olympic records, but we compete among ourselves," McDonald said.



Actor Billy Barty, center pointing, coaches his team during a basketball tournament for dwarfs.

The Associated Press



Sacramento Union 7/30/88

# Little People convention offers opportunity to be average

By LINNET MYERS

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

**F**OR A week at least, it almost seemed as if everything were scaled down to size in Des Moines, Iowa.

The Little People of America conventioners had arrived in town, and the average-sized world bent down to welcome them.

A little set of stairs led up to their hotel's registration counter; milk crates were in each elevator so that guests could reach the buttons; salt and pepper shakers were placed at the edges of tables; and towels were taken down from their racks. It was very convenient.

Ordinarily, so many things are oversized or out of reach.

"Sometimes what aggravates me is the sinks you can't reach," said Billy Barty, the 3-foot-9 Hollywood actor who founded Little People of America Inc. in 1957. "And look at that — that doorknob is too high," he said, pointing to a convention meeting-room door.

In general, life as a dwarf is a series of minor irritations. And one major one: society.

"Sometimes society forgets to look at people on the inside instead of the outside," said Denise Moore, chairperson of this year's Little People of America convention.

But in late July, the little people turned all that



AP PHOTO

**BILLY BARTY**, an actor who founded Little People in 1957, attended the convention, too.

• Please see **LITTLE, C2**

## Short statures are usually inherited growth disorders

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

**W**HEN Dr. Charles Scott Jr. first became involved with the Little People of America, he felt kind of strange. At 6-foot-3, "I felt I was the one everybody was looking at," he said.

But now, 22 years later, he has made a lot of little friends and easily forgets the physical differences. As a geneticist, he also has learned a lot.

With other geneticists, Scott, chairman of Little People of America's medical advisory board, runs free clinics for the little people during annual conventions. They offer genetic counseling and give advice on medical problems common among dwarfs.

There are about 45,000 little people in the United States, said Scott, who is also director of the medical genetics department at the Alfred I. DuPont Institute in Delaware. Their short stature is usually inherited.

About 70 percent of LPA members have

• Please see **GENETIC, C2**



# CONVENTION: Dwarves attend support gro

● From C1  
around.

Mitchell Seidenfeld, of Minneapolis, attended the annual convention for the first time. "Most people go through their lives trying to individualize themselves, to separate themselves from other people, to be unique," said Seidenfeld, 25.

"As a dwarf, you're automatically separate. But here you're stripped of that. You're on your own. You're more than a little person in a big world, you're just a person. ... We're all the same size, and there's nothing except my personality or my thinking to set me apart."

Seidenfeld, for the first time in his life, was faced with the question: "How do I get this person to notice me?" He had become just another face in the crowd, and that was kind of nice.

About 700 people attended the week-long convention, which ended last Saturday. The event was designed "to deal with all the aspects of being a little person in an average-sized world," said Daniel Margulies, who was just finishing his term as Little People of America president.

The non-profit group, based in San Bruno, has about 5,000 members nationwide, Margulies said. Anyone 4-foot-10 or under is eligible to join, but at 4-foot-8, Margulies is one of the tallest members.

The convention offered workshops, sports and social functions, including dances. For many, it was nice to dance with someone cheek-to-cheek for a change, but the convention was more than just that.

"What tends to happen, it becomes one week out of 52 weeks that's a break from the public eye," said Margulies. "You're not on display. ... For the average little person, it's standard for a kid on the street to stop and stare and say, 'There goes a little man!'"

"You're judged by your height — whether you're the nicest guy in the world or the biggest jerk," he said.

In workshops — on the job market, civil rights advocacy and caring for the "little littles," as the children are called — they discussed their problems:

The advocacy group talked about what to do about telephones, bank

## GENETIC: Looking at odds

● From C1

achondroplasia, characterized by short stature and disproportionately short arms and legs — and caused by the spontaneous mutation of a gene. "You would say lightning struck — a rare chance happened," said Scott. In normal — or "average," as dwarfs prefer to state it — parents, the chances of having a baby with achondroplasia are 1 in 40,000, he said.

Once the child has the gene, he may pass it on to the next generation. The gene, which also tends to cause spinal problems and bowed legs, is dominant. Therefore, if one parent has it and the other parent is normal, their child has a 50-50 chance of having achondroplasia, Scott said.

If both parents are dwarves, the child has a 25 percent chance

of being normal and a 50 percent chance of being a dwarf. Should the child receive the gene from both parents, he will die at birth.

Although achondroplasia is the most common, more than 100 well-defined bone-growth disorders cause dwarfism and another 100 appear very rarely, said Scott.

About 10,000 of the little people — called hypopituitary dwarfs — are short because they lack growth hormone, said Scott. But the hormone now can be manufactured and "that race, so to speak, has been dying out," said Harry McDonald, vice president of LPA.

Such people, proportioned like average children, are commonly called midgets, said Scott. But McDonald said the word midget "came from the circus era — the sideshow — and most of us don't like it."

machines and those large people behind the windows at self-service gas stations.

"They couldn't see me," a little blond woman said. "I'd be waving my \$10 and they couldn't see me."

"Sometimes you can't even reach the zero on the phones," another woman said. She wondered why that was, because that must mean that average children can't reach the zero either. Wouldn't it be easy to lower the phones?

In the job market workshop, they talked about discrimination.

"Once, they asked me, 'What are you going to do about your size?'" a woman recalled.

Another man recounted a job interview: "She looked at me very startled and said, 'You didn't tell me.' I said, 'You didn't ask.'"

Darcy Painter, a personnel director, has turned the tables on the average-sized world.

When prospective employees come in, "that's their first test — when I stick out my hand and say hello," she said. "They have to

immediately get over it and realize that if they want a job, they have to deal with it and deal with it quickly."

Throughout the week, conventioners discussed their life experiences.

Harry McDonald, a mechanical engineer and vice-president of Little People of America, said that "when you go shopping, you ask somebody to reach something for you. Little old ladies are great — little old men are great, too. After they see you're having difficulty, they follow you."

"I say 'Look, let's make this easy. You get everything waist up, I'll get everything waist down. I'll save your back, you save me from climbing.' When I leave, I've acquired a friend."

Paul Steven Miller, a Los Angeles attorney, graduated from Harvard University Law School in 1986. He said one law office told him they wouldn't hire him because "our clients might think we were running some circus-freak sideshow."

Stunned, Miller wrote an article —

with publication Short — on Against

job, but problem. "I and it was here I was, a gray pin- to reach a

very inter- is of people ay who's a are excited and what I eted to me, / boss loves. about people

paying attention to me."

Miller's parents, who are of average height, began taking Miller to LPA conventions when he was a child. He thinks that's one reason he has become so successful.

"Coming here is like tapping into a power source," he said. "You leave with a new sense of self. You see well-adjusted, energetic, enthusiastic, loving people. ... You think, 'These people are wonderful, and I am wonderful.'"



# Company thinking small with

The Associated Press

HIALEAH, Fla. — Actor Billy Barty was delighted as he settled his 3-foot-9 frame into the blue and white lounge chair.

His feet touched the ground.

"How can you put a price on the smile that came across his face?" said Michael Buzzella, vice president of Sunburst Outdoor Furniture, which is beginning production on one of the first specially designed lines for dwarfs, midgets and other people of small stature.

"To be able to sit in a chair with your feet touching the ground is something average-size people don't even think about. For little people, it's an uncommon thrill."

Barty, a consultant on the project, said the Sunburst designs are among the first items ever pro-

duced specifically for "little people," as he terms anyone afflicted by the nearly 200 different forms of dwarfism.

"We are a minority that is really a minority," said Barty from Tulsa, Okla., where he is filming a movie. "We are mostly handicapped by physical barriers we face. Clothes have to be cut down; light switches are too high."

"I can't tell you how wonderful it felt like to sit in a chair with your feet on the ground and your back in the proper place," added Barty, who has championed causes for little people since the late 1950s.

Sunburst, which supplies outdoor furniture to resorts and hotels around the world, began thinking small last year with a line of children's furniture for Florida's Walt Disney World.

Company founder and president R.W. Buzzella,

## furniture for little people

who had personally constructed a scaled-down bar and stool set for a dwarf couple three years ago, thought the children's furniture might be adapted for the nation's 1.5 million little people. A letter was sent in March to Barty at his Foundation For Little People office in North Hollywood, Calif.

Barty quickly responded and arranged a visit to the Sunburst production center in Hialeah shortly after the release of "Willow," in which he plays a high priest.

"But he immediately showed us that furniture for little people and children are very different," said Michael Buzzella, arranging three chairs side by side.

The children's chair was smaller but in the same proportions as the adult version. The little people's

model was modified with a low seat and elevated arm rests to accommodate their shorter limbs and torsos.

"It was a real learning experience for us," said Buzzella. "You just can't put a little person in children's furniture. It doesn't work and they are not comfortable. They have their own special dimensions."

Sunburst, a division of MetalTech Inc., unveiled the Rainbow Collection in July at a convention in Des Moines, Iowa, attended by about 600 little people.

Buzzella took about 80 furniture orders. Many had special requests, such as an extra narrow seat for a woman with a rare, acute form of dwarfism.



Friday July 21, 1989

## Expect fallout from ban on tossing dwarfs

**I**T IS A DIFFICULT legal and ethical issue that just won't go away. I'm talking, of course, about dwarf-tossing. And something new: dwarf-bowling.

After seeming to fade away, dwarf-tossing has flared up again in New York and Michigan.

Some angry legislators in New York say dwarfs are being tossed and bowled in bars on Long Island and in New York City. And they are going to introduce laws making it illegal to toss or bowl a small person. The same thing has happened in Michigan.

As you probably recall, dwarf-tossing contests originated in Australian bars. Then the shocking practice spread to this country.

I have mixed feelings about this issue.

On the one hand, I can understand why little people, and those who sympathize with them, consider dwarf-tossing and dwarf-bowling demeaning. (Dwarf-bowling, incidentally, consists of strapping a helmet-wearing dwarf to a skateboard and propelling him into bowling pins. I have no idea if anyone has ever dwarfed a perfect 300 game.)

On the other hand, does society, through its laws, have the right to tell a consenting, adult dwarf that he cannot be tossed or bowled if he chooses to be tossed or bowled?

There are those who would argue that this is a decision that each individual dwarf should make.

A dwarf might argue: "I have a right to make decisions concerning my own little body. If I elect to put on a helmet and permit some large lout to fling me through the air onto a soft mattress, and I am paid for this, then let me earn



**MIKE ROYKO**

my living the way I choose."

The dispute over dwarf-tossing and bowling reminds me of a similar controversy that I became involved in during the 1960s.

At that time, Riverview, one of the nation's greatest amusement parks, still existed in Chicago. It had thrilling roller coasters, spook houses, tunnels of love and dozens of other exciting rides.

But it also had something that was called, as I recall, "the African Dip."

These were several high, narrow cages. Black men, or Negroes as they were then called, sat in the cages on wooden slats, shouting taunts and insults at spectators.

You would pay 25 cents for three balls and throw them at a metal disc attached to the cage. If you hit the disc, it collapsed the seat and the black man would fall into chest-high water. This delighted the ball tossers.

One day, while taking my kids through River-

view, I watched white men tossing balls and causing black men to fall and splash in the water, and my youthful, liberal soul was offended.

**T**HE NEXT day, I wrote a column about how the African Dip was disgraceful and racist; how it provided whites with malicious joy, while demeaning Negroes, stripping them of dignity; how it had no place in the 1960s, the era of the civil rights movement.

Within a few days, the African Dip was no more. The cages were taken down. I had triumphed.

The only problem was that about six black men showed up at my office, stood in front of my desk and demanded to know why the hell I had caused them to lose their jobs.

As one of them said: "I was making good money for shoutin' insults at a bunch of honkies and gettin' a little wet, and most of them couldn't throw good enough to put me in the water one out of every 25 throws."

I explained that there were greater moral and social issues involved.

And he said something like: "Yeah? Well, what about the moral issue of you getting me fired? What kind of job are you going to get me now?"

Unfortunately, I couldn't get them jobs. I still think I was right, in theory. But I also may have been a little stupid, in reality.

So those who want to ban dwarf-tossing might think about that.

**MIKE ROYKO** writes for the Chicago Tribune. His column appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.







